

Columbia, Parsons students develop Balenciaga boutique launch strategy

Posted By [Joe McCarthy](#) On December 13, 2013 @ 4:45 am In [Apparel and accessories,Featured,Industry sectors,News,Research,Retail](#) | [No Comments](#)



[1]

Proposed in-store plaque engraving technology

NEW YORK – French fashion label Balenciaga worked with a team of students from Columbia Business School and Parsons School for Design’s interdisciplinary program “The Design and Marketing of Luxury Goods” to gain insights into upcoming boutique launches.

The students revolved the proposed launch around seven Balenciaga “codes”: modernity, art and innovation, structure, the number 10, the diamond lattice pattern, marble and music. Additionally, the team benefited from working parallel to the actual Balenciaga SoHo boutique in New York opened Nov. 22, which marked the first store opening under the influence of the new creative director Alexander Wang.

“The team’s objectives were to promote an evolution rather than a revolution,” said Ijeoma Arum, MBA candidate for retail and management at Columbia Business School, New York. “So we wanted to make sure that we stayed true to the Balenciaga heritage, but we evolved away from some of the past creative direction.

“Additionally, we wanted to introduce a new clientele, but also engage the current clientele,” she said.

“Lastly, we wanted to make sure that this strategy was universal, that it could be replicated as Balenciaga continues to open boutiques worldwide.”

Additional team members from [Columbia Business School](#) [2] included Melissa Foo, Sara Huneke and Matt Wilkes. Team members from [Parsons School for Design](#) [3] included Anna Bajenov, Abbas Jamali, Phillip Wyatt and Amy Xiaotian Zhang. As with the other presentations in the Luxury Education Foundation program, fine details were withheld for the brand’s use only.

The core

With guidance from Balenciaga mentors, the hybrid team infused its boutique launch proposal with the previously mentioned brand codes. The number 10’s presence in the brand’s history can be seen in the Paris store location, 10 Avenue George V, as well as many other places.



Ms. Arum and Mr. Wilkes of Columbia Business School

Mr. Wang’s passion for music informed the team’s focus on this subject, while marble and diamond lattice were identified as key visual themes. Modernity, art and innovation and structure are fundamental driving principles.

To gain purchase on consumer habits, the team pinpointed five consumer personas that vary in purchasing power, affinities and social predilections. The five personas were loyalist, internationalist, aspirationalist, tourist and gallerist.

"These personas along with the codes discussed really are the foundation of our launch strategy," Mr. Wilkes said.

Mr. Wilkes is an MBA candidate for retail and management at Columbia Business School.

Throughout the rest of the launch proposal, the team identified the personas targeted for each phrase using relevant symbols.

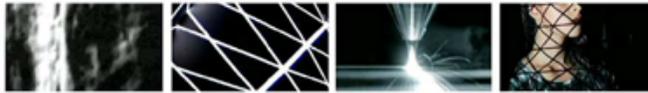
Building anticipation

Four proposed buzz-building tactics centered on the number 10. The first component would be guerilla art installations throughout SoHo occurring 10 days prior to the launch.

A marble light installation was created to appear all along Mercer Street, drenching all objects in this branded symbol to establish the store's atmosphere.

LAUNCH OVERVIEW LE DIX HAPPENINGS

10 1 0 10



TEN MARBLE DESIGNS ARE PROJECTED ON TO BARE WALLS ACROSS SOHO TEN DAYS PRIOR TO LAUNCH

ONE PROJECTED STREET NET UNIFIES THE WOMEN'S AND MEN'S BOUTIQUES

EVERY PARTY GUEST RECEIVES A CUSTOM ENGRAVED BALENCIAGA PLAQUE AS AN ENDURING KEEPSAKE

TEN VIDEOS FEATURING BALENCIAGA PRODUCT AND BRAND CODES APPEAR ON A BALENCIAGA WEBSITE ONE AT A TIME, FOR TEN WEEKS AFTER THE LAUNCH

Launch proposal

A single projected street net, based on the diamond lattice symbol, would be projected to connect the menswear and women's wear boutiques that reside on opposite sides of the street.

To crystallize the boutique launch experience for those in attendance, the team suggested providing each guest with an engraved Balenciaga plaque. The plaques would be customized with Balenciaga symbols using iPad technology as customers enter the store.

The fourth component would be 10 videos that emerge each week for 10 weeks leading up to the launch. The videos would be taken down from the main Web site after their designated week, only to be accessible via social media, to give the launch a mounting sense of preciousness.

"These concepts can be expanded across the globe as Balenciaga expands its retail presence," said Ms. Bajenov, BBA candidate for strategic design and management at Parsons School of Design, New York. "The concepts are able to be transported both physically and culturally."

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on *Luxury Daily*, New York



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[2] Columbia Business School: <http://www8.gsb.columbia.edu/>

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